

GURU TEGH BAHADUR A STUDY

By
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P R E F A C E

Guru Tegh Bahadur occupies a unique eminence in the annals of the religious history of man. He appeared on the scene at a time when Indian society was caught up in an unprecedented socio-cultural crisis. The Mughal empire was at the pinnacle of its power and glory but unfortunately it had also turned ever so intolerant and oppressive. Its political philosophy laid special emphasis on stamping out all forms of pluralism whether political, religious or social and demanded total conformism in faith, belief, form and action. In the vision of the Sikh Gurus a sane human society was essentially a plural and multi-central one in which each people was afforded the opportunity to work out its genius to its fullest possibilities and potentialities without any interference by the outside authority. The role of the State in enforcing a particular faith on the people of India as a whole was not only violative of man's inherent desire for variation and variety but was also promoting alienation of the sons of the soil from their own selves and their rich cultural heritage.

From the very beginning Guru Tegh Bahadur's was a consecrated life which found its ultimate consummation in the "Unique Drama" of his martyrdom for the sake of upholding *Dharma* and infusing new faith and hope in the hearts of men. The Tercentenary of his martyrdom which fell in 1975 sparked off a great deal of intellectual and academic activity. The present book "Guru Tegh Bahadur—A Study" by Dr. B.S. Gupta can be safely considered as one of the best works which were called forth by the celebrations. Dr. Gupta has been eminently successful in restoring the essential element of integrity between the historical and the universal and the secular and the sacred as it blossomed in the life and works of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Upon his keen analysis and refreshingly original interpretation of the works of Guru Tegh Bahadur,

Dr. B.S. Gupta brings to bear the insights of his own mystical experiences as also study of western classics.

Panjab University, Chandigarh, sponsored the publication of the present work and Sheikh Baba Farid Chair of Medieval Indian Literature secured a grant for the purpose from the Punjab State Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Martyrdom Tercentenary Committee. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express our gratitude to the President of the Punjab State Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Martyrdom Tercentenary Committee for making this publication possible. The keen interest taken by Prof R.C. Paul, Vice-chancellor, in the project has been, as ever, a source of great encouragement and strength for us.

I am also greatly obliged to Mr. R.K. Malhotra, Secretary, Publication Bureau, Panjab University, for keen interest taken by him for bringing out this work in as presentable form as possible.

Mr. O. P. Vasishta, Editor, English-Punjabi Dictionary Department, and Mr. Hans Raj Grover, Stenographer, Publication Bureau, rendered great help in reading the proofs while Mr. Harbhajan Singh Halwarvi, Lexical Assistant, graciously undertook the labour of compiling the Index. I may also put in a word of appreciation for Mr. Prithipal Singh, Stenographer, English-Punjabi Dictionary Department, for preparing the press copy.

Chandigarh
March 14, 1978

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INTRODUCTION

The present work is a modest attempt to present a fresh interpretative study and a synthesised view of Guru Tegh Bahadur's personality, work, vision and sacrifice. It is specifically written on the eve of the tercentenary of the holy martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, yet it is more than a mere amalgam of the Guru's life and teachings. It is devoted to the unfolding of the Guru's creative personality, the nature and significance of his enlightened response to life and history, the hidden beauty and consistency of his poetic compositions and the philosophy implicit in them. These things are discussed not cursorily but in depth, and not in piecemeal isolation but as a whole.

The main flaw in the piecemeal approach is that it leads to conclusions which, as explained in the course of the study, fall short of a total estimate of the Guru's moral, spiritual and historical greatness. Critical interpreters and historians who do not take into account such an integral view fail to penetrate to the deeper levels of the Guru's response to life in his hymns as well as in his encounter with the historical situation. In order to enter into deeper meaning of his poetry and the fuller spirit and significance of his supreme sacrifice, a total view of the Guru's life and writings is indispensable. Hence this work, an integrated study of the various facts of Guru Tegh Bahadur's life, work, vision and martyrdom.

Ours is not a religious age. But the modern man can better understand religion on the level of the psychological rather than on the level of the unfamiliar. I have, therefore, tried to analyse some of the Guru's beliefs and ideas in the light of contemporary thought, particularly with reference to modern psychology, without encumbering the work with technical jargon.

The two chapters on biographical matter are not exhaustive but selective and interpretative with a view to bringing the Guru's movement of the mind and inner growth in philosophical and historical perspective.

I have meditated on the original hymns of the Guru, a copy of which in Panjabi script was given to me by my friend, Sardar

B.S. Tej. I was so much attracted by the depth of its inherent philosophy that I was inspired to write this book. In fact, earlier I was faced with two alternatives : to translate the hymns into English verse or to write a full-length study of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Since time at my disposal was short, I could not undertake both. I, therefore, chose the latter and for translations depended on Macauliffe. Macauliffe's translations may miss the spiritual connotation of the text but are dependable in the sense that they aptly convey the literal beauty of the original.

Since the Guru's poetical output is small, certain repetitions of lines or passages extracted from hymns and *Slokas* are bound to occur in an extensive dealing with various facets of the Guru's achievements. I have, however, tried my best to place each extract in a fresh key, while quoting it again in other chapters.

The book is divided into four sections and nine chapters.

The first chapter is focussed on Guru Nanak's creative vision, the mainspring of inspiration for the succeeding Sikh Gurus. It refutes the prevailing view that Guru Nanak was reformer, and not a revolutionary. It shows that the Guru's creative vision was not merely a reformative venture but a revolutionary step in the direction of reshaping the human individual and the society. Not only did it release an enquiring spirit among the people but it also restored the lost touch with the cosmic evolution, and showed the higher dimensions of consciousness, where all men are integrated and transformed. Guru Nanak powerfully applied the ambrosial flow of his ethical-spiritual wisdom to the problem of harmony between the outer and the inner modes of life, and rejuvenated not only the Indian tradition but the human spirit also. This was possible because he was a rare combination of a saint and revolutionary. His creative vision reached its climax in the holy martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

The second chapter deals with early formative years and the later years of contemplative seclusion which helped in the growth of Baba Tegh Bahadur's personality, rendering him eminently fit for holding the spiritual sceptre of Guru Nanak.

This chapter shows how Guru Tegh Bahadur's life was a preparation for the supreme act of sacrifice.

The third chapter deals with the epoch-making sacrifice of the Guru, and shows that the way Guru Tegh Bahadur met the challenge of history was, in fact, a unique practical application of spiritual wisdom in a situation triggered by the historical condition. It throws light on the larger meaning and significance of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom by unravelling the philosophical implications involved, by refuting distorted versions of historians about martyrdom and by originally interpreting it in the light of Toynbee's historical formula of challenge-and-response.

The fourth chapter offers a fresh and consistent interpretation of the Guru's hymns, bringing out the dominant theme which lends a total meaning and inner unity to the Guru's sacred poetry. With the exploration of a central, unifying theme, the key issue in the poetry becomes clearer—the movement of the human mind, its relation to the progress of man along the path of self-enhancement, self-enlightenment and self-emancipation. This chapter also contends that the Guru's poetry does not deal with empty transcendentalism nor is it a mere exercise in didacticism.

The fifth chapter makes a general survey of the Guru's *slokas*, couplets, in an attempt to show their thematic coherence. It brings into focus the Guru's relation to tradition, his innovating trend and his characteristic way of relating the spiritual life to the need of his times. The chapter also discusses the Guru's poetic style.

The sixth, the seventh and the eighth chapters trace, analyse and shape the Guru's scattered but implied religio-philosophical thoughts into a coherent whole.

The concluding chapter contains an evaluation of the Guru's personality, work, vision and sacrifice as a whole. It also tries to clear certain misconceptions which arise from interpreting his hymns or his will-to-sacrifice in isolation. Finally, it brings out the relevance of the Guru's life and wisdom to our modern times and throws light on the creative aspects of his martyrdom.

I shall deem my labour rewarded if the book fulfils its function of promoting a deeper understanding, finer awareness, a fuller appreciation of the Guru's moral, spiritual and historical achievements.

In this study I have tried to bring in my humble insights into the interpretations of the various facets of the Guru's life and writings. I have drawn upon translations of the Guru's hymns made by Macauliffe, published by Oxford at the Clarendon Press, and I acknowledge my indebtedness to them. Moreover, to substantiate and support my viewpoint, I have quoted from the Holy Granth Sahib and a few modern writers on history and philosophy and all these have been duly acknowledged by me either in the text or in the footnotes.

I am particularly grateful to Sardar B.S. Tej, Divisional Employment Officer, Haryana, Chandigarh, but for whose interest, encouragement and generous assistance the book would not have come into existence. My grateful thanks are due to Shri G. C. Bansal, now Reader in Library Science, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, and Shri U.K. Tiku, Lecturer in Library Science, Panjab University for making available certain requisite material for this study. I also express my sincere thanks to Dr. S.B.P. Nigam, Reader in History, Kurukshetra University, for lending me some books on Mughal history from his personal library. I am particularly grateful to Professor Kuldip Singh Batra, former Joint D.P.I., Haryana, for his valuable suggestions. A special word of thanks goes to Dr. Sher Singh Dhillon of University College, Kurukshetra, for assisting me in the prompt preparation of the manuscript.

I express my deep gratitude to the President, the Secretary and members of the distinguished Sardar Mohan Singh Ahluwalia Awards Committee for recognising my humble contribution to Guru Tegh Bahadur Literature by adjudging my work as one of the best books on the subject.

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CHAPTER I

GURU NANAK : THE SAINT AND REVOLUTIONARY

A Specific Life-view

Each great movement, religious or secular, is a creative vision in the mind before it becomes a fact of history. Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh Religion, ushered in a revolution, based on a clear-sighted vision to redeem mankind from outer and inner darkness. The facile historical imagination paints Guru Nanak as a reformer. But an attempt at remaking of human personality and reordering of human life on the pattern of new ideals is more than a mere reformative venture. It is a big forward leap to revolutionise the human mind and society. Guru Nanak's mission was to open up a new vista of progress, a new perspective of thought and a new order of discipline in consonance with laws of the beauty of soul. He offered a specific life-view which was not static but dynamic in the sense that it had to be realised creatively in the living. The greatness and originality of his creative vision lay in the fact that it presented a fine fusion of the religious and the actual. And it was this new revolutionary mode of work and thought which not only amounted to the negation of the prevailing false modes but also brought into operation an effective and continuous form of campaign for liberation, ranging over more than two centuries, from Guru Nanak (1469-1539) to Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708).

To present a new vision, a new faith to man is full of promises and threats in relation to it. Guru Nanak's faith aimed at liberation from fear, liberation from stinking superstitions, liberation from the fossilized tradition, liberation from the

shackles of social exploitations and liberation from spiritual ignorance, social vice and corruption at all levels. Above all, it aimed at liberation of man from thralldom of false needs and satisfactions. Such needs and satisfactions thwart the growth of man's personality and keep him contented with that condition. In that state of mind, man cannot achieve real moral and spiritual health. Guru Nanak diagnosed the spiritual ills of society, recognized the disease of fragmentariness and grasped the chances of curing the disease. "All liberation depends upon consciousness of servitude" says Herbert Marcuse, a modern thinker, and "the emergence of this consciousness is always hampered by the predominance of needs and satisfactions, which to a great extent, have become the individual's own". Not only did Guru Nanak point out false needs and satisfactions but also aimed at the replacement of false needs and satisfactions by true ones. His purpose was not merely to expose false notions about religion but to fill the vacuum created by such an exposition.

Re-orchestration of Life's Harmonies

Religion, for Guru Nanak, was not a dogma or an intellectual gymnasium but an exalted way of life, a way of inner enlightenment that builds up the spiritual, ethical and social personality of man by inculcating in him love of truth, virtue, service to God and to humanity. As such, religion must make for honesty of mind and recovery of faith in higher values. Guru Nanak's rediscovery of the oneness of God and unity of mankind was not for its own sake. Based on his personal, living but supreme religious experience, it was a fresh basis for building a stable society upon earth and for giving it a new dynamism with which to face and remove dangers of division inherent in human nature. He showed that religion considered in the context of rigid formalism had shaken the foundations of human life and that it had also unleashed anarchy and moral chaos. There was no salvation for man unless mankind entered a new phase of cosmic evolution. It was possible by coming in contact with God, the Timeless, Eternal Will, the plan or the power behind evolution, which guides the universe. Guru

Nanak thus restored the lost touch with the cosmic evolution and showed the higher dimension of consciousness, where all men are integrated :

One indivisible God or soul is manifesting all the forms, and is the source of all light and life in the Universe.

Guru Nanak was so much alive to the need of the hour that he spoke with a new accent, as it issued out of the depth of his heart, in an extra-ordinary endeavour to apply his spiritual insight to practical life. He offered a special remedy for the spiritual sickness of the Age. Spiritual sickness means psychological illness. It was a time when people suffered from a spiritual or psychological malady without realizing that something was missing from their lives. Guru Nanak cautioned man about living a life which was deviated from certain psychological, ethical and spiritual norms. Since it was a psychological and ethical illness, the remedy sought was in terms of moral and spiritual measures.

The very application of this remedy to human affairs shows that Guru Nanak had a deep practical knowledge of psychology. He knew that roots of human discords lay in the human mind and heart. They must be changed and attuned to higher values for the uplift of mankind. He himself emphatically declared that unity of mankind could be enduringly accomplished by realising the presence of the divine particle in every person.

Apart from stressing the unification of existence, Guru Nanak stood for re-orchestration of the proper harmonies of all life, for by this alone could man and society hope to bloom in creativity, goodness, love and fraternity. He did not condemn the world as an illusion but considered it a field of action, necessary for the evolution of an individual, for his inner transformation and spiritual regeneration. Long before Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan appeared on the Indian scene and stressed the necessity of spiritual salvation in the process of social well-being, Guru Nanak had combined spiritual enlightenment with the welfare of the masses. He

exhorted the Jogis not to retire from the world into Himalayan retreats in order to seek their personal salvation at the cost of neglecting the social good. He advised the common people to shun formal rites and to look to the essential as against the mere accidental, not to cling to the outer shell of religion but to look to its essence, its wisdom which is universal in scope and spirit. But he was more than a mere reformer. He attacked the citadel of superstitions with his sword of wisdom, and tried to replace the formal shows of religion by the dynamics of a new outlook. To the priests he pointed out that though they were studying holy scriptures, they had "daggers under their arms". Mere preaching, in his eyes, was of no avail unless it was translated into practical living.

Challenges of the Age

Guru Nanak himself has given a vivid picture of his times. India was bleeding under the iron heels of the haughty, cruel rulers. When Babur invaded India, it was a period of social, moral, political and spiritual chaos :

Both the modesty and piety have hidden themselves,
and falsehood is the presiding authority, O Lalo.¹

Again : Kings are the butchers and humanity bleeds under their knife.²

Guru Nanak compared the kings with butchers, and their officials with dogs.³ The kings were sunk in voluptuousness :

The kings lost their sense because of sensuous pursuits.⁴

The rulers were lacking in constructive vision. The storm of the Mughal exploitation was unleashed against the Hindus :

-
1. Tilang, M.I.
 2. Rag Sarang, M.I.
 3. Var Malar. M.I.
 4. Asa, M.I.

The temples and gods are taxed ;
This is the law of the land.⁵

There was a complete segregation between the Muslims who were intolerant and the Hindus who were conventionally orthodox. The true spirit of Islam and Hinduism had disappeared. Religion had lost its spiritual savour and had degenerated into more religiosity :

This was an age of tyranny, corruption and exploitation :

The darkness of the age has made demons of men,
Sin is the king, Greed the minister,
Falsehood, the mint-master and Lust its deputy ;
They sit and confer together.⁶

Even the so-called leaders of religion, instead of bringing justice and enlightenment to the people, were themselves in the grip of selfishness, hypocrisy and sloth :

The Kazi tells lies and accepts hush-money.
The Brahmin, cruel at heart, bathes in holy waters.
The Yogi knows not the true essence of Yoga.
All three are at one in bringing harm to the people.⁷

It was during this dark period of Indian history, Guru Nanak released his message of harmony of mankind based on his living experience of spiritual realization. This was a powerful application of spiritual wisdom towards de-freezing of the Hindu-Muslim relationship by awakening people to the divine harmony and unity at the heart of seeming diversity of life. Didn't it amount to revolutionise the human mind through peaceable measures ?

Guru Nanak, in fact, stood for the mystic realization of the unity of man, of perfect identity at a spiritual level where all racial differences vanish. At the same time he released a new spirit which questioned the conventional garbs of Hinduism.

5. Basant Hindol, M.I.

6. *Adi Granth*, p. 468.

7. *Adi Granth*, p. 662.

To change the bad habits of centuries, to set the suffocating mind free out of the moulds of ceremonial and unenlightened orthodoxy, to initiate people into a new life, to pass poetic strictures on the superstitions and sentimental attitudes of religious priests, to raise a protest of the heart against imperial hatred and aggression—all this was not an easy task and Guru Nanak's creative vision was a revolutionary response to the challenges of the age. His creative vision was a factor of social progress and spiritual enrichment. To communicate it to the masses was his great achievement.

Pride, Foe to Vision of Wholeness

Guru Nanak's account of the Imperial rulers shows that he was aware of the demoniac depths of aggressive dictatorship. To improve Hindu-Muslim relations, he gave expression to the truth of what may be called religious relativism by peaceful co-existence of these religions. With a deep understanding of the human psychology, he clearly brought into focus the difference between harmony and discord. At the heart of discord, he found, was pride—man's readiness to mutilate and even destroy the sacred edifices raised by the human mind and society with a view to glorifying and magnifying his own private universe. Guru Nanak has exposed the imperial pride, the priestly pride, the richman's pride and even the commoner's pride. It is man's pride which imprisons his intellect and does not allow it to acquire a fuller depth and meaning of life and to have a glimpse of an organic unity underlying the Universe or of the Ultimate Reality present in all. It is pride which creates gulf between man and man, between reality and existence, between spirit and life. The king in his pride becomes tyrannical and intolerant of other's faith. The priest in his pride perpetuates the perversion of religion in stinking formality and empty exhibitionism. The wealthy persons in their pride do not cease to exploit the poor. Even the common people take pride in gratifying their false needs and satisfactions.

Guru Nanak also found pride at the heart of creed and caste-and-class consciousness. He, therefore, recommended

humility as the greatest virtue, lest the poison of pride should work havoc with an individual's inner enlightenment or recognition of truth or innate goodness in man. His own sense of humility is well illustrated when he calls himself one of "the lowest castes of the singers", a "slave of the slaves of men of God."

No wonder, therefore, if Guru Nanak did not exhort the people to conquer empires but to conquer the mind. "If the mind is conquered, the whole world is conquered".⁸ The conquest of the mind signifies inner transformation, and no true transformation, and no true transforming of the society is possible unless the man who wants to do so himself has undergone the process of self-purification. It is inner purification which helps man to lead a less self-centred and more creative life :

Those engrossed in falsehood find no spiritual poise.⁹

With purity of heart alone may one find God.¹⁰

Moreover, Guru Nanak found that people were devoted to *things* as opposed to *values*. They were severed from the creative fountain of all life and adhered to fragmentary shows of the outer world. In it he saw a denial of something basic and eternal to human experience. The human experience was in this sense incomplete, and men were content to live in fragments. The truly religious life, according to Guru Nanak, was not fragmentary but fullness of human life. He aimed at restoring the creative vision of the wholeness lost in the masquerade. He, therefore, advised the people to draw upon the inner sources of truth without losing touch with the world which, according to him, is also the abiding place of God. But honesty, nobility and truthful dignity must not be sacrificed in following worldly pursuits. Guru Nanak's approach is opti-

8. Japji, M. 1.

9. *Adi Granth*, p. 940.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 472.

mistic and synthetic in the sense that he holds that regeneration of life is possible on the pattern of values which are true, and mankind can be saved by returning to its roots in the eternal and by rendering service to fellow-beings : "A place in God's Court can only be attained if we do service to others in the world".

A New Vision of Man

Broadly speaking, Guru Nanak chose to perform a two-fold task, the task of awakening the masses as well as masters of the esoteric way, siddhas and ascetics, to inner demands of the soul and to outer demands of the existential reality respectively. To liberate the common man from external insecurity and internal anxiety, he sounded a clarion call to live a pure, truthful and courageous life by turning to God, the divine centre within, which delivers us from every type of defilement, fear, anguish and despair. His creative vision not only supplied the missing link between man and the inmost centre of his being, but also served as a corrective to the exclusive extremism of the spiritual path. To become spiritual, for him, was not to become lost to the world.

Led by a deep humanistic impulse, the Guru gave a rousing call to Siddhas, accomplished masters of spirituality, to come out of their private universes and to ameliorate the human condition. His deep concern for the well-being of man in dark times is evidenced from the following lines that occur in *Siddha-Goshti* :

The earth is in the grip of falsehood ;
The bull is groaning under the grievous burden,
The Siddhas have hidden themselves in the mountain
caves ;
Who might save the world ?

What Guru Nanak implies is that the decline of *Dharma* (righteousness) and values is not a terrifying factor, on the part of the men of spiritual attainments, for with drawing themselves from the world, for hiding themselves from the people's gaze, but rather an opportunity for saving them. The over-abstract

love of pure truth and shrinkage from the world for fear of being contaminated by it is not a healthy sign of spirituality. It should be combined with humanistic ethic, with the spirit of kindness and compassion, the will to serve the suffering humanity. Mere self-perfection and self-liberation have no meaning if the world continues to groan in chains of evil and ignorance. The decline of *dharma*, therefore, is essentially an instrument of liberation, and not of an escape from history into inner life.

The Guru's searching eye had also noticed that at a time when the mass mind was ruled by religiosity, superstitions, passions, prejudices and gross materialistic considerations, and the so-called leaders of religion—Yogis, pundits, sanyasis and tapasvis—too lived in shells of narrow, particular pursuits, the society was left to the mercy of the unscrupulous exploiters :

Pundits are busy studying Puranas;
Yogis are busy in inward meditations;
Sanyasis are ego-drunk, and ascetics
Are drunken with secrets of the way ;
All are drunken, none is awake,
While thieves are robbing them.¹¹

To be awake in the Indian spiritual tradition is to be enlightened. The Guru's stress on wakefulness, as we have illustrated, is extended to all persons—householders, siddhas, yogis, ascetics and pundits.

The Guru, therefore, not only depicted the human situation as he found it during his times, but he also came forward to voice the need of a new Vision of Man. He made a revolution of values and opened up a new dimension of reality, where the tang of transcendence was reconciled with the pulsating rhythm of life, where vision was combined with action, knowledge with love, wisdom with virtue and self-enlightenment with the ideal of social duty. What he aimed at was indeed a fruitful synthesis between inward growth and outward performance.

11. *Adi Granth*, p. 64.

Even the Guru's encounters with Siddhas and Pirs (Moslem anchorites) bring home to us the truth that the spiritual is not divorced from the ethical. Spirituality is not the art of building a hermitage on the height or throwing of an invisible net which is more of a hindrance than a help. It is rather the art of seeking inner enlightenment and establishing an enduring contact with the Absolute, Timeless Reality, by transcending the horizon of the ego-world, but without going outside the moral orbit of tolerance, humility, charity and compassion in the process.

As regards the miracle stories of Guru Nanak, these are symbolic expressions of the tenets of his living faith, and as such provide a rich field for research.¹²

A Programme for the Future

Guru Nanak's writings present not only an indictment of the society of his time but also a programme for the future. He travelled far and wide to bring about social, spiritual, political and even economic awakening among the people. He had a vision to build a democratic and social order on the foundation of the rule of righteousness, an order which guarantees the individual freedom, gives him or her equal rights, social security and social harmony. The Guru's approach was of course rooted in spiritual idealism. His message was for the world which lived for its sensations and ignored the Divine. The evils of social, political and religious exploitation, growing out of proportions, stifled the growth of the interior life. Man was dehumanised in the social, economic and political fields. The seventeenth century, in fact, posed the dilemma of whimper and bang. While the officials like dogs attacked the subjects in gleeful whimper, the imperial hands were closing the doors of justice and love with a bang. It was an atmosphere of moral and political unease which destroyed faith in the essential and moral uniqueness of man.

12. The present writer in the preface to his book *The Rock and the Pool* (Guru Nanak Themes) has discussed this point.

Guru Nanak offered a programme to help man to realize the truth and to foster it in society, for all that is built on the distortion of the truth is useless. He brought in the revolutionary concept of a transforming religious process which could affect the socio-economic system, abolish some of its worst evils, and open a perspective for profound change in the society. It was a formidable task indeed to set right the disorder in the heart of things. But through the positive programme Guru Nanak earnestly strove for the reconstruction of human society by rejuvenating the human spirit.

He endeavoured to bring about radical changes in society by introducing the following five dynamic concepts : the concept of a casteless, classless society, the concept of *Sad Sangat* (congregation), the concept of the institution of Guruship (spiritual succession), the concept of sharing of one's honest gains with others and the concept of the common kitchen.

With his strong faith in the unity of man, Guru Nanak vigorously protested against the caste-system which had set artificial barriers between man and man. He brought in a revolutionary concept of the caste in his mystic way. Instead of looking to the caste, he advocated to look to the spirit of God present in every person :

Realise spirit of God in all,

Ask not the caste;

Caste counts not in the world to come.¹³

What mattered, according to Guru Nanak, was not birth in a low or high family but performance of good actions and the spiritual development of man. In his characteristic way he remarked :

“A person of low caste is he who forgets the Master”.

So lowliness is linked with man's fall from spiritual consciousness.

Since the divine light dwells in all, the Guru pleads that we should stop enquiring about the caste of human beings. In fact, all illusions about caste and class are melted in the loving contemplation of the One Indivisible Absolute Being. In the realm of enlightenment, there is no consideration of caste and birth :

In the House Eternal caste and family have no place ;
Actions alone determine one's caste and status.¹⁴

Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib appropriately describes the Guru's approach to caste and class as "the emergence of a new spirit of humanity".¹⁵

The institution of *Sangat* was more than a mere concept. It was an experiment in harmonious living, which in due course flowered into a strong force to resist the oppressive moods of the rulers. The very building of this institution shows that Guru Nanak knew the importance of the people in the set-up of a new society. He raised his strong protests against sinful exploiters, knowing well that their exploitations would last as long as "ignorance makes the people blind to their welfare".

Guru Nanak's introduction of the institution of Guruship (Spiritual succession) was an effective and continuous form of adventure in animating the soul of man towards higher fulfilment. It carried on the spirit of his creative vision, in the course of nine succeeding phases, into the orbit of spiritually-oriented humanism and religious solidarity.

The concepts of sharing the fruit of one's honest work with others and of the running of the free common kitchen are obviously economic programmes for the welfare of people. They contain the germs of a true socialistic pattern. The very concept of enjoying the fruit of one's toil by sharing it with others is the forerunner of Marxist's criticism of individual possessions

14. *Adi Granth*, p. 1330.

15. *Guru Nanak, His Personality and Vision*, 1969, p. 262.

and its accent on the enjoyment of one's possessions by sharing with others. A free common kitchen (*Langar*) where masses and classes dined together, was manifestly the Guru's living vision of brotherhood in action.

We thus find that Guru Nanak's creative vision stemmed from his own live, central experience of spiritual realization of the unity of mankind and oneness of God. In the light of this experience, he initiated a quiet revolution by urging man to reach back into deeper meaning of his relationship with the Cosmic Order, and thereby to bridge the gulf between the eternal and the temporal. In times of political unrest and moral chaos, he aimed at reconditioning of the human vision, and God-realization was used as a driving force for the tasks of reconstruction as well as for saving people from the social, political and economic exploitations.

Guru Nanak was the uncompromising apostle of equality and fraternity, the great leveller, who stood for the regeneration of the common man. In the middle ages when imperialism had its full sway in the world, Guru Nanak brought to the world an idealistic, revolutionary vision of a new order. It was the vision of spiritual democracy, based on a feeling of kinship with all created humanity. In it he saw possibilities of universal peace, tolerance, brotherhood and moral and spiritual regeneration of man :

From one Supreme Light sprang the Whole Mankind ;
All persons were as if sparks of the One Flame,
Who then is to be called good or bad ?

Innovations

To call Guru Nanak, therefore, a mere reformer, a mere preacher who preached only wisdom of the old in a modified form is to underestimate the dynamism of his creative vision, a vision which created a new dimension of depth in which humanistic and spiritual values beautifully blend and strike a new path for humanity. The view advocated by Dr. Hari Ram Gupta that "Guru Nanak was not a revolutionary but a

reformer''¹⁶ falls short of such a comprehensive grasp. As already illustrated by us, Guru Nanak's own living, breathing experience of genuine inner enlightenment and perception of the Reality at the heart of existence is at the back of the dynamics of his faith. Mere theoretical acquaintance with the essential nature of reality is not enough. Nor does it bless a man with supreme insight into the source of all life and light, for without actually realising it man cannot achieve the creative vision that stems from the response of his whole being to the sense of the Real. Once as a result of this response the essential uniqueness at the centre of all human beings is realised, the creative vision, man's inner dynamism, is stirred into action for the welfare of mankind, and distinctions between '*sat-asat*', real and unreal, stand revealed. Such a man speaks not only from the depth of his soul but speaks with a fresh and fearless emphasis and vigour that induces new innovations to carry the society forward.

Dr. Hari Ram Gupta denies such innovations made by Guru Nanak. While referring to the institution of *Sad Sangat*, he traces it back to the concept of the Buddhist *Sangita*¹⁷. What chiefly matters is not a few traditional names or phrases that are present in the hymns and teachings of the Guru, but the central current which enlivens, illumines and liberates, and has a distinct practical purpose and a nucleus of its own. Guru Nanak's concept of *Sad Sangat* does not smack of Buddhist monastic discipline. It is thus an integral part of the Guru's creative vision to let people not only survive in the dark historical times but also to raise their personalities by making them grow towards a collective enlightenment. While Buddhism believed in renouncing a householder's life to embrace monastic discipline, Guru Nanak advised people to live the life of full-blooded householders. He exhorted people not to flee from the battle of life, not to renounce hearths and homes, but to realize God by renouncing age, greed, pride, lust and all other vices which were

16. Guru Nanak Foundation Volume, 1964, p. 53.

17. Ibid., P. 52

dehumanising them. In *Siddha Goshti* he says :

In pursuing the Divine amid the normal life
lies true commerce with God.

The Guru's concept of *Sad Sangat* aimed at improving the spiritual perception, ethical conduct and social harmony of the congregation.

Moreover, the projections of Guru Nanak's creative vision are not all fully in line with the ancient Indian tradition. His doctrine of One God who does not incarnate but is the merciful Creator and Sustainer and his doctrine of Karma tempered with the commanding will of God (*Hukam*) are subtle examples of differences. Again, his rejection of *Karma Kanda* of *Varnashrma Dharma* and of the cult of gods and goddesses, and his emphasis on seeking the divine within rather than in the shows of rituals and waters of the holy places constitute a glaring departure from orthodox Hinduism.

Furthermore, Guru Nanak's blend of ethics with spirituality, his accent on the truth of relative reality of the world and, above all, his endeavour to bridge the gulf between the spiritual and the material, the timeless and the temporal, nay, between faith in God and human situation, are distinct progressive concepts which sound forward-looking and revolutionary, when considered in the context of Indian thought and the times when they were preached. Even in the twentieth century modern Indian philosophers, by and large, have focused their stress on them, in their attempts to explicate the value of Indian thought.

The main charge levelled against Indian thought by Westerners is that it is "world and life negating" and hence it is incompatible with the ethical ideal because "man cannot engage in ethical activity in a world with no meaning."¹⁸

The credit goes to Guru Nanak for having introduced a conspicuous note of world and life affirmation in his teachings.

18. Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, pp. 2, 65.

He explicitly pointed out that neither this world was an illusion nor was life an empty dream :

“True are thy worlds, true Thy Universes,
True Thy Lokas, true The forms Thou createst.”¹⁹

The Universe, for Guru Nanak, is true because it is created by the True One :

The Universe is the dwelling place
of the Real One and He lives in it.²⁰

Guru Nanak's thought is creative in the sense it affirms the reality of the world, the meaningfulness of life and the immense seriousness of ethical discipline needed for inner perfection. The evolution of the soul is the purpose of human existence. Ethical perfection is not an adornment but an integral part of spiritual perfection :

“Upright persons are eternal, like the Lord.”²¹

Again, the Guru holds that service of humanity assures a seat in the Court of God.

This combining of humanistic ethics with spirituality dynamically contributes to Indian tradition in general, and to the healthy growth and progress of man and society in particular. Guru Nanak did not approve of the isolating trend of self-centred spiritual obsessions to the neglect of ethical value. He believed in bringing an inward change in man that would fit him for confronting life with all its vicissitudes and eventually for the realisation of God, the fundamental Truth. His standpoint was not life-denying but life-fulfilling. He thus stood for a vision of wholeness, for a synthesis of humanistic and spiritual values, to involve a better and saner society.

It would, therefore, be lack of proper assessment of Guru

19. Asa, M. 1

20. Asa. M. 1.

21. Raj Suhi. M. 1.

Nanak's wisdom to believe that it is only reformed repetition of the old one. The Guru asserted the dignity of the human spirit and challenged the conventional yardsticks of religion and society of his times :

No bath can purify a body defiled by falsehood,
Ablution is accepted only if one lives truthfully.

His dynamic revaluation of Yoga : (*jog*) corresponds to the deeper spirit of his creative vision.

Jog lies not in the cloak,
nor in the staff,
nor in ashes smeared over the body,
jog lies not in earrings worn,
nor in shaving the hair
nor in the blowing of horns.
Abide pure amid the impurities
of the world ; this is the way to *jog*.

The stress is laid on the quality of inner cultivation rather than on external trappings :

Make 'contentment' and 'modesty' thine earnings,
'Earning by honest work' thy begging bowl,
'Remembrance of God' the ashes to smear
'Thought of life's end' thy blanket, on thy body ;
'Keeping body free from evils' thy yogic penance
And 'faith in God' thy rule and thy staff.

The Guru's achievement is to make use of spiritual enlightenment as a healthier basis for social relationship, to make religion the personal as well as the social instrument of liberation.

The Saint and Revolutionary

Guru Nanak is essentially a mystic saint. But his mysticism is not simply a means of access to the divine principle in man but also a way of life, a way that brings about a radical transformation of personality. He lays greater emphasis on integrity,

on quality and character of man than on mere integration or metaphysical passion for truth :

Truth is great but greater than truth is truthful living.

Paul Tillich, the German philosopher, while referring to the limit of mysticism says, "it neglects the human predicament and the separation of man from the Ultimate. There is no faith without separation." But Guru Nanak's mysticism releases a new vision and a new awareness where man's relation to society is not overlooked in a search for realization of the ultimate Truth. It reconciles the worlds of time and eternity for fuller humanization of man.

Guru Nanak's creative vision thus comprises a synthetic attitude towards life, towards the individual and society as well as towards the individual and the Cosmos. It is this synthetic vision which is important enough to save man. Arthur Koestler, a modern thinker, has perceptively pointed out :

The Commissar's emotional energies are fixed on the relation between individual and society, the Yogi's on the relation between the individual and the Universe.²²

But he has suggested :

Neither the saint nor revolutionary can save us, only the synthesis of the two²³.

Such a synthesis is found in the creative personality of Guru Nanak. He was both a saint and revolutionary and hence a real saviour. He felt that it was vitally necessary for people to establish fruitful relationship with God, the Highest Truth, without negating life and the world.

Guru Nanak was thus more than a mere denouncer of the corrupt and evil practices current in his age. His was not merely a protest against religious formalism, as it is hastily

22. *The Yogi and the Commissar and Other Essays*, London, 1960, p. 11.

23. *Ibid*, p. 256.

generalized, but a plan, a plan to let the inner reality in man operate the crooked bypaths of life to more straightness and to make the temper of the age inwardly heroic. What revolution could be greater than this peaceful revolution started by Guru Nanak to break down barriers between man and man, to enable them to face the contemporary nightmare with spiritual fearlessness and moral courage and to build a social order that is fused with an elevating sense of the timeless and the temporal ?

At a time when religion had lost its inner eye and man's vision had become very narrow, Guru Nanak cured the sightlessness of religion and imparted a new perspective to man, enabling him to realise a sense of a spiritual order, of unique divine Effulgence at the heart of Creation. Such a perception results in a feeling of unity and love of our fellowmen, bringing much-needed peace and security on our planet. And Guru Nanak's creative vision was an adventure in this direction. His break with formal ceremonialism was more than a mere reformation ; it was a revolution, a non-violent clash between convention and progress, between complacent order and adventure. The more we delve deep into his life-histories and poetic compositions, the more we find that we owe to him not only many stimulating ideas but also many fundamental insights.

Flowering of the Creative Vision

After the death of Guru Nanak, his nine spiritual successors carried on the torch of his creative vision, illuminating dark corners of the human mind, rejuvenating the human spirit with ambrosial words of wisdom and songs of devotion. There began the spiritual transformation of their followers, the Sikhs, through self-purification, self-elevation and an uprightness of character that is born of self-transfiguration in the process of dedicated service to God and man. But spiritual transformation to flower as a way of life must possess a dynamism to face the dangers of external aggression in some form or the other. And

the dangers and threats came from the most powerful quarter, the ruling Mughal Emperors. The succeeding Guru rose equal to the occasion. Their diagnosis of moral perplexity, of political oppression, of the deepening spiritual crisis led them not to retreat, like Siddhas into the Himalayan private solitudes ; instead, they became increasingly committed to the truth, to righteousness and spiritual freedom, and became ready to face the stresses that were inseparable from the political condition. Instead of bending down to the Mughal will, Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Master, and Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Master, suffered heroically, fearlessly and courageously. They suffered as well as sacrificed their lives in the cause of truth, justice, righteousness and religious freedom. From creative suffering to creative sacrifice was a glorious step which culminated in the armed defence of religious freedom and all that was precious in the domain of humanistic and spiritual values. The sixth Master, Guru Hargobind and the tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh actually fought against the Mughal armies.

In their fight against political baseness, against aggressive passions, imperial lusts and horrors, the Gurus and their followers showed their true spiritual mettle. All the finest qualities—heroism, fearlessness, courage, tenacity, serenity of disposition in the face of torments and tortures, and a will to lead a life consecrated to higher values, a will to embrace martyrdom with a smiling face—came to the fore. Thus the quiet revolution started by Guru Nanak in its progressive phases became a potential basis of freedom for man, freedom from tyranny, freedom from injustice, freedom from ruthless religious conversion, but it did not cease to draw upon the inner resources of truth, the inner dimension of the mind which recognises the moral and spiritual consciousness as a fact. When the wheel of history revealed the ugliest face of religious fanaticism and barbarism, the tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh unified his followers' energies and emotions, social, moral, spiritual, into a formidable force to stem the tide of Imperial tyranny. Guru Nanak's creative vision thus reached its full flowering in a challenging but disciplined religious force to fulfil the obligation of history.

But this full flowering of the Guru's creative vision was possible only after the climax it had attained in the unique martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. And to Guru Tegh Bahadur we shall now turn, for an understanding of his personality, vision and sacrifice.

CHAPTER II

GURU TEGH BAHADUR

Towards Creative Sacrifice

Life of Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675), the Ninth Guru, is a deathless saga of spiritual greatness, of amazing self-discipline and self-conquest, of inspiring courage and lofty resolution, of selfless service and creative sacrifice. It is creative in the sense that it releases a new dimension of truth and freedom for man. Self-discipline is pre-requisite to creative sacrifice. With its mergence, the higher aspects of man's nature, the deeper faculties of his soul come into play. The man of self-discipline then works in a spirit of selflessness and is ready to offer his life as a sacrifice to the Supreme Lord of the Universe or for the supreme cause of truth in which he sees the working of the Will of the Supreme. It requires exceptional energy, strong will and enlightened fearlessness before such a creative sacrifice is made.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's whole life was a preparation for this big event, the creative sacrifice. It was a psychological move from the formation of his creative personality, through a process of inner discipline—truthful living, forbearance, tolerance, self poise, kindness and contemplation—to the unique expression of his will to embrace martyrdom in the cause of truth, justice, religious freedom and righteousness.

Formative Years

Guru Tegh Bahadur was born on 1st April, 1621 A.D. at Amritsar. He was the youngest son of the Warrior Guru Hargobind, the fifth spiritual successor of Guru Nanak, the sixth Guru and the grandson of the first Sikh Martyr, Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru. He had, from his very childhood, a meditative frame of mind, a reserve and detached disposition.

He loved the solitude not for its own sake but for his love to meditate on God's name. Even at the age of five, he used to enter Samadhi, and his father made a prophesy that he would be a great spiritual leader and a mighty hero. His love of contemplative seclusion helped him to probe the depth of his nature, to explore the inner divine reality and to get into enduring contact with it. He was also endowed with a sensitive and receptive mind and was quite active in responding to good influences and high heroic qualities around him. His father, Guru Hargobind, exercised major early influence on him, and he lived with him for twenty two years. These were, indeed, formative years of his mental and spiritual growth.

At his father's house he imbibed the virtue of humanity, the inner urge to attain self-enlightenment, the spirit of fearlessness and fortitude, of self-dedication and of deep faith in the Divine. He developed aspirations towards a life of selfless service, and sacrifice, with a moral and spiritual courage to abide by the Cosmic Will. He learnt how one could become fearless by relying on the strength and power of God. Armed with this spiritual wisdom, which he later on realized creatively through meditation, he emerged as a dynamic figure to hold Guru Nanak's sceptre and to meet the crisis for which he was being prepared by Nature.

But it may be pointed out that his education was not exclusively religious ; it was secular too. He learnt the use of various weapons and developed necessary skill in horsemanship. He had witnessed and even participated in the battle of Amritsar in which his father fought fearlessly, courageously and perseveringly against the Mughal army. The battle symbolised for him the battle for Dharma (righteousness) against the unprovoked boisterous outbreak of fanatic imperial passion.

Another event which produced a lasting impression on his mind was the death of his brother, Baba Atal. Baba Atal, as a young boy, had performed a miracle by bringing his dead friend to life. His father, Guru Hargobind, did not approve of miracle performing feat and as a result of it, Baba Atal buried himself alive. From this incident young Tegn Bahadur learnt the

spiritual necessity of complying with the Cosmic Will than stooping to the act of working a miracle. And he adhered to this conviction in the time of crisis when a miracle performance on his part could have appeased the relentless Moghul Emperor, Aurangzeb.

There is another incident of his early youth which shows an extraordinary practical nature of the young mystic saint. It is said that a mother brought her ailing son to him for a cure through his blessed, powerful prayer. The young mystic asked her to come on the fourth day. On the fourth day as the lady came, the young mystic told her not to allow the boy to take jaggery as was his habit. The boy was completely cured after a few days. The mother enquired of Baba Tegh Bahadur why he had not told her earlier and postponed it for three days. Forthwith came the reply : "I myself was in the habit of taking jaggery. During these three days I tried to give up this habit and I succeeded in it. How could I prescribe the giving up of a habit to which I myself was addicted ?"

This incident reveals an early deep foundation of truthfulness on which his subsequent career was to be built. He indeed would not preach that he had not practised. This reminds us of Yuddhishtra, a great Pandava, well-known for his truthfulness. It is said that as a young student, Yuddhishtra was given a lesson by his Guru ; the lesson contained the words : "Speak the truth". While other sons of Kauravas and even his own brothers, the Pandavas, committed the lesson to memory in a few days, it took Yuddhishtra several days to master the lesson. When asked by the Guru, Yuddhishtra replied ; "How could I say that I grasped this lesson unless I myself had trained my mind to speak the truth ?"

Anyway, we find that there was a profound moral integrity in Baba Tegh Bahadur's nature. He grew in great moral and spiritual atmosphere at his father's house.

Meditation Cell

During the next twenty years, he chose the life of silent but active contemplation at Baba Bakala, a village in Amritsar

district. It was not a life of self-mortification but a life of deep devotion to God and of dedication to His Will. While living in the heart of the village, with his family, he was in fact, filling the deepest layers of his being with the ambrosial breath of the Divine Name. This let the spirit of Guru Nanak's creative vision surge in him with all its depth and beauty. The psychology of Meditation is that it helps to establish a sort of telepathic communication between the soul, the inner reality, the principle of our being, and the integrating principle of the universe. To live in a meditation cell is not to escape from the life of action but to explore the fundamental nature of life, for meditation is a method for realizing the truth in the broadest perspective of eternity.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of meditation—meditation at its height and meditation in its fullness. Those who practise the former retreat from the world of appearances into an entirely transcendental Nirvana. They have no concern with human relations. Those who practise the latter form of meditation, they attain the height of spiritual experiences, have glimpses of timeless reality, but step down from the height to bless the suffering humanity. Guru Nanak laid stress on the second form, meditation in its fullness. To the Yogis, Siddhas and saints he presented the ideal of spiritual attainment through meditation on God's name and its use for the good of humanity. He reconciled the spiritual perception with a proper concern for human needs. Guru Nanak's spiritual tradition thus holds that after attaining the divine height, one has to lift others from darkness to liberate the world. In *Japji* Guru Nanak says : "There can be no love of God without active service". Baba Tegh Bahadur's long spell of silent meditation purified and perfected his will. Meditation on God's name is a means of inner purification and of attuning self-will to the will of God. Through it Baba Tegh Bahadur entered the realms of divine knowledge and truth (*Gyan-khand* and *Sach-khand*) where he had a clear knowledge of the working of the Divine Will in the universe. The truth of the Ultimate Reality dawned upon him and his personality was perfumed with the fragrance of spiritual experience that came from within.

Spiritual realization thus must issue out in action in the larger interest of humanity. Meditation on God's name is essential. How could one be a true preceptor, a true Guru, without realizing the True One? The world is saved not by the armchair drummers of human welfare but by those who rise above dark egotistic moods by participating in the brightness of their being. Through meditation Baba Tegn Bahadur achieved inner enlightenment and became eminently fit for carrying on the torch of Guru Nanak's creative vision. None else but a person installed in light could be installed on the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak.

Discovery of the Guru

Guru Hari Kishan, the Eighth Master, on the eve of his death, had prophetically announced that his successor would be found at Baba Bakala. Accordingly, there sprang up a score of posers and pretenders who proclaimed themselves as successors to Guru Hari Kishan at Bakala. Ram Rai, the nephew of Guru Tegn Bahadur, and Dhir Mal, a Sodhi Khatri were the chief aspirants to Guruship. This gave rise to a wave of exploitation. The devoted Sikhs were puzzled over it and the innocent ones were even falling victims to it. But Baba Tegn Bahadur, with his perfect devotion to God had completely identified himself with His Will. He asserted no claim because his mind was full of calm detachment, divine illumination and contentment that was beyond ordinary comprehension. Even when the *Hazuri Sangat*, headed by the Diwan of Guru Hari Kishan's durbar, acknowledged Baba Tegn Bahadur as the Ninth Guru, the Guru accepted the honour in utter humility with the remark: "The call of the Almighty cannot be disobeyed". But he accepted the spiritual succession on the condition that they would not publically proclaim him the Guru, because he did not like to be dragged into the mire of competition with the imposters who were employing nefarious tactics to exploit people. This gesture speaks eloquently of his true detachment, and is a fine manifestation of his inner serenity and self-elevation born of the practical realisation of the supreme doctrine of *Hukam* enunciated by Guru Nanak. True self-

realization is annulment of self-will and the fulfilment of God's will or purpose on the earth. "Every one is within His *Hukam* and none is out of it. He who understands this *Hukam* can never talk in ego". Guru Tegh Bahadur by complete adherence to His Order and Will had achieved a new equilibrium in his personality and had thus practically shown a very high sense of dedication to the Supreme.

The emergence of Makhan Shah, a rich merchant, on the Bakala scene, where a sort of Guru industry had been set up by the false gurus, is one of the brilliant episodes in the Sikh History. Twenty two imposters had pitched their tents, and their agents were busy in attracting people to their respective camps. This reminds us of the Bible's famous words :

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.¹

But who would discriminate the real sheep from the wolves ? How would the public come to know about the true Guru ? This dilemma was resolved by the providential appearance of Makhan Shah at Bakala.

The Makhan Shah episode merits serious attention. Apart from the fact that it is full of dramatic interest, it has a four-fold significance. It reveals the silent but invisible working of the saving grace of Baba Tegh Bahadur, the benign, sterling qualities of his head and heart in dealing with the wicked imposters, and his tender and positive insistence on the potentialities of love and forgiveness whereby he enlarged the inner dimension of his followers. The episode also exposes the filthy falshehood of fraudulent, gold-seeking gurus.

Makhan Shah, a wealthy trader, had come to Bakala with the specific purpose of offering 500 gold coins to the Guru by way of gratitude and fulfilment of his vow. It is said that earlier his ship carrying merchandise was caught up in a storm, and he prayed to the Guru in his heart of hearts to save his ship and in lieu of it he promised to offer 500 gold coins. The

1. Sermon on the Mount.

Guru's saving grace came into operation. The ship was saved and Makhan Shah, with his entourage, came to Bakala to fulfil his promise. But he was surprised to see so many camps, each claiming to be the abode of the genuine Guru. It was all uncertainty and confusion at Bakala. Makhan Shah hit upon a plan to test the genuineness of each camp-dwelling guru. He would visit each camp, offer two gold coins to each Guru, instead of the stipulated sum. The true Guru, his erstwhile true saviour, would divine his mind and would not accept two coins but the exact amount that he had promised to offer. When the scheme was put to practice, the imposters were glad to accept two coins from him. Makhan Shah became depressed.

On learning from a village boy that there was another guru not in a camp but in a house, Makhan Shah visited the specified house. Here the atmosphere was different. He could not enter without permission. He was at last allowed to see Baba Tegn Bahadur in his meditation cell. Reaching there he placed two gold coins before the Guru and bowed down. The Guru at once remarked, "Why are you deceiving me? You promised to offer five hundred gold coins when your ship was sinking, and now you are offering only two." Makhan Shah could not contain himself with joy. He had discovered the Guru. He was ecstatic over his discovery. He went back to his camp, brought the requisite number of coins, offered them to the Guru and bent down his head in great reverence. The Guru blessed him. Deeply delighted over his discovery of the Master, Makhan Shah wanted to release the happy news to the pious and devoted Sikhs who were still in search of the Guru and were being misled by unscrupulous exploiters. He, therefore, proclaimed from the house top, "I have found the true Guru, I have found the true Guru." On hearing this the Sikhs assembled to pay homage to the great Guru. The Will of God worked mysteriously and Makhan Shah was made an instrument to bring Guru Tegn Bahadur before the long-awaiting *Sangat* (congregation).

Well-poised Personality

As already mentioned, Guru Tegn Bahadur preached what he practised. The very first hymn that he sang, when he came

out of his meditation call to greet the *Sangat*, was a remarkable illustration of his well-moulded, well-poised personality :

“The light of God shines in him who considers gold as good as dust, who indulges not in slander and flattery, and who is indifferent to all praise or blame.”²

Had not the Guru himself shown infinite patience, infinite self-control, infinite goodness in considering gold as dust, in his attitude to the Guru-posers in general and to Dhir Mal and his masands in particular ?

While all the posers had fled away with announced discovery of the Guru, Dhir Mal was filled with uncontrollable jealousy. He instigated a masand to put an end to the Guru's life. The Guru was attacked in his house. A bullet was fired at him but the Guru escaped with a minor injury. The masand seized the movable property of the Guru, together with the gold coins offered by Makhan Shah, and decamped to the house of Dhir Mal. But the Guru remained calm. Makhan Shah, with his reverential zeal, could not brook the inhuman treatment meted out to the Guru. He, with the help of his men, invaded Dhir Mal's house and recovered the Guru's property. Dhir Mal's property also was seized and both Dhir Mal and the masand, the plunderer, were brought before the Guru. Both the offenders begged for mercy. The Guru in his good gracious way pardoned them. All things belonging to Dhir Mal were returned to him. Makhan Shah was advised to keep restraint. Guru Tegh Bahadur thus became a living light of the true spirit of Guru Nanak, and taught people to follow the right path.

Mark the contrast between Guru Tegh Bahadur, the embodiment of nobility, serenity, love and forgiveness, and Dhir Mal, the unscrupulous and callous imposter. On the one side there were forces of love and light which raised man to the height of the spirit, on the other side there were wickedness and viciousness which reduced man to the sub-human level. On one side was the magnanimity of the Guru's mind, and on the other side

2. *Sorath*, M. 9. *Adi Granth* p. 633.

there was the narrowness of a heart, darkened by acquisitive passions.

Democratic Vision and Social Work

Guru Tegh Bahadur possessed not only a lofty humanistic temper, but also had a democratic view of *Sangat*. His first address to the *Sangat*, after the announcement of discovery made by Makhan Shah, savours of a truly democratic approach. The very first sentence that he uttered was : "I am here at the will of the *Sangat*". This shows that the Guru was well aware of the importance of the people in the new social set-up.

The Guru founded the town of Anandpur, and later on undertook extensive travels all over North India and even visited the distant region of Bengal and Assam where he spread the gospel of his faith. Raja Ram Singh, son of the late Raja Jai Singh, had sought the Guru's blessings during an expedition to Bengal on which he was sent by the Emperor. The peaceful compromise brought about by the Guru between the Raja of Kamrup and Raja Ram Singh to avoid the battle was a remarkable feat of his sagacity and the success of his mission of peace.

His keen interest in the social and economic welfare of people is clear from the fact that he financed the digging of hundreds of wells in the Punjab, Haryana, U.P., Bihar and Bengal. Thus the Guru had the good of the people at heart and his spiritual enlightenment issued forth in an active process of economic, social, moral and spiritual well-being of humanity.

Challenge of History

The challenge of history which the Guru had to meet was inherent in the conditions of his times. The Muslim State in India being entirely subordinate to the Church, believed in the orthodox ideal of waging war (*jihad*) against infidels. "The murder of the infidels (*Kafir-Kushi*) is counted a merit in Islam."³ "The conversion of the entire population to Islam and the extinction of every form of dissent, is the ideal of the Muslim

3. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, p. 256.

State”.⁴ According to this ideal “non-muslims (*Zimmis*) are not citizens of the State”.⁵ They have to undergo political and social disabilities and pay a toll-tax (*jaziya*), to secure the right of exercising their religion.

The enlightened and liberal kings were of course against conversions by force. Emperor Akbar was against “forcible conversions”.⁶ He abolished *jaziya* and showed considerable tolerance to non-Muslims. In his sixth year, Jahangir issued an order against forcible conversions to Islam.⁷ But Aurangzeb who reigned from A.D. 1658 to 1707 A.D. pursued his policy of religious persecution with fanatic zeal. The manner he had usurped his throne by throwing his father into prison and by killing his brothers, Dara⁸ and Murad, are well-known facts in history. In order to recover public respect he “posed as the champion of Islamic orthodoxy”⁹ and began to win the favour of *Ulemas* and Islamic priests by waging a relentless *jihad* against non-Muslims. This resulted in orders for destruction of the temples of the Hindus and discriminatory treatment against them.

Even before accession to the throne, as a viceroy of Gujrat, Aurangzeb had converted the temple of Chintaman in Ahmedabad into a mosque. In his eleventh year of reign, on 9th April, 1669, “The Emperor ordered the governors of all the provinces to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels and strongly

4. Ibid, pp. 249-50.

5. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. I, p. 959.

6. *Akbar Nama*, Text, Vol. II, p. 159.

7. *Tuzk-i-Jahangir*, Text, Vol. I, p. 101.

8. When Jahanara visited Aurangzeb in her bid to reconcile her brother and also expressing the wish of the Emperor to partition the Empire among brothers, Aurangzeb said to his sister : “Dara is an infidel to Islam and a friend to the Hindus, he must be extirpated for the sake of True Faith and the peace of the realm. I cannot visit the Emperor before concluding the business”—Aqil Khan Razi, *Waqiat-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 59-61.

9. Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, p. 117.

put down their teachings and religious practices.¹⁰ As a result of this order, wanton destruction of Hindu places of worship took place throughout the country from 1669 to 1705. The Vishwanath temple of Benaras was demolished sometimes in August 1669, and in its place a mosque was built.¹¹ The temple of Gopi Nath at Banaras was also demolished about the same time.¹² In January, 1670, in the month of Ramzan, the religious-minded Emperor ordered the demolition of Keshva Rai Temple at Mathura. His officers accomplished it in a short time. A grand mosque was built on its site at a vast expenditure.¹³ The author of the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* ejaculates : "Praised be the God of the great faith of Islam that in the auspicious region of this destroyer of infidelity and turbulence, such a marvellous and (seemingly) impossible feat was accomplished. On seeing this (instance of the) strength of the Emperor's faith and the grandeur of his devotion to God, the Rajahs felt suffocated and they stood in amazement like statues facing the walls."¹⁴ In short, as a result of the general order for the destruction of the Hindu places of worship, temples of Malwa, Orissa, Khandela, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Amber, Citor, Mewar, Haidarabad, Ujjain, Golcanda and Maharashtra were raised to the ground".¹⁵

Moreover, in pursuance of his discriminatory policy against the Hindus, Aurangzeb excluded the Hindus from public offices. In 1671 the Emperor issued orders that Hindus were not to be employed in the Revenue Department as assistants to various heads.¹⁶ Earlier on 9th May, 1667 he had abolished the custom duty altogether in case of the Muslims though on the Hindus it was retained at the same level of 5%.¹⁷ Moreover, the Hindu

10. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 81.

11. *Ibid*, p. 88.

12. U.N. Day, *Some Aspects of Medieval Indian History*, p. 223.

13. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 95-96.

14. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 96.

15. Sarkar, *op. cit.* Appendix V.

16. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 528.

17. U.N. Day, *Some Aspects of Medieval Indian History*, p. 221.

festivals of Diwali and Holi "were ordered to be held only outside bazars and under some restraints."¹⁸

It is strange that none raised a voice of protest against all these discriminatory measures against the Hindus. Mirza Raja Jai Singh Kachwaha, Raja Jaswant Singh Rathore and the whole host of Hindu and Rajput Chiefs in the employ of the state did not dare to raise their finger.¹⁹ The Rajputs did not protest because they were too much self-centred and what mattered to them was "their *gaddi* and personal gain. Their religion had failed to infuse in them that spirit which Islam infused among its believers".²⁰ Thus "Aurangzeb was absolutely certain that whatever steps he might take to make the state based entirely on the lines of the *Shariat*, there would be no opposition from the Hindus who by then had become supine and completely resigned to their lot of suffering and degradation." If he had "received opposition just when he launched his policy of discrimination against the Hindus, he might have reconsidered his measure and would have stopped at a certain point".²¹

It is against this historical background that the true significance and impact of Guru Tegh Bahadur's supreme sacrifice should be judged. The crying need of the hour was the appearance of a man of loftier stature who possessed moral strength, inner discipline, a sense of high mission and heroic determination, a selfless spirit of dedication and of detachment from earthly gains so that he could fearlessly come forward to voice a protest against forcible conversions and violations of the human rights. And such a man was Guru Tegh Bahadur, the enlightened saint who 'inspired no fear, and who had no fear of others' and who had inner reserves to meet the mounting crisis, as if nature was preparing him for the great mission.

18. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 279.

19. U.N. Day, op. cit., p. 222.

20. Ibid, pp. 228, 230.

21. Ibid, p. 230.

CHAPTER III

THE EPOCH-MAKING SACRIFICE

Call for Sacrifices

When Guru Tegh Bahadur was spreading his gospel of love and truth, India's political horizon was red with religious fanaticism. Aurangzeb, the ruling Mughal Emperor, had created a terror among the Hindus on account of widespread religious persecutions and conversions at the swordpoint. The terror assumed a most horrifying reality when it was known that Aurangzeb wanted an *en masse* conversion of Hindus into Muslims by a planned process of converting Brahmans into Muslims and thereby he aimed at the creation of Dar-ul-Islam. This was a signal for the liquidation of Hinduism. Who could resist or restrain the mighty egocentric holder of power? The situation became serious in Kashmir where Sher Afghan Khan, the Governor, in compliance with the Emperor's general order, set about conversion of the Hindus by force and massacred those who refused to forsake the faith of their fore-fathers. There was no constitution to protect the rights of the people. The will of the sovereign was the law of the land. At such a critical juncture, a delegation of Kashmiri Pundits approached Guru Tegh Bahadur for help. They narrated their tale of woe and implored for protection in their hour of real distress. The Guru felt great compassion towards them. But how could the determined and dreadful hand of religious fanaticism be checked? The Guru plunged into a deep thoughtful mood.

In the meanwhile his young son Gobind Rai appeared on the scene. He asked his father why he was in a pensive mood. The Guru replied, "Son! You do not know that the country is oppressed by the Mughal Emperor. Hindu Dharma is in peril. The situation is eased only if a holy or noble soul offers himself

at the altar of Dharma". At this young Gobind Rai remarked, "Dear father ! who is holier and richer in nobility than you ?" On hearing these words from the lips of his young son, Guru Tegh Bahadur was delighted to see his detached and daring spirit.

Momentous Decision

The Guru then made a momentous decision of great historical significance. The saint who had earlier saved the ship of Makhan Shah on the stormy waters, now decided to offer his life in order to stem the cruel, imperial tide which threatened to engulf Hinduism. It was only through such a sacrifice that the moral law could be set in motion and wrong undone.

The Guru told the Kashmiri Pundits to go and convey to Aurangzeb to convert him first to Islam. If he succeeded in doing so, they all would follow suit. The Kashmiri Pundits were over-joyed to hear the decision of the Guru. They knew that the Guru was a saint of deep integrity and would never succumb to temptations or be overawed by torments and tortures.

There is a strong sense of the moral dimension of freedom in the Guru's decision to help the Brahmans out of their impasse. It adds a unique richness and depth to his creative personality. His sublime awareness of his own freedom and moral responsibility combined with a spontaneous readiness to suffer and to sacrifice his life for removing others' sufferings is an unprecedented act in the history of humanity. The Guru's selfless, God-centred personality fully peeped out of his grand free choice. It marked a contrast with Aurangzeb's approach. While the despotic rule of Aurangzeb affirmed the rule of prejudice and passion, the rule of a master over slaves, the Guru asserted the rule of the soul over the body, the rule of mind and reason over the human passion and extended the principle of compassion to his afflicted countrymen. On one side was the political power, the instrument of exploitation and high-handedness, on the other was the strength of high-

mindfulness, of Dharma (righteousness) to liberate Hinduism from the increasing suffocation of religious intolerance.

Encounter with Aurangzeb

The Kashmiri Brahmins who had found in the Guru a true saviour acted in accordance with the Guru's advice and made a representation to the Emperor. Aurangzeb sent two officials to the Punjab to summon the Guru to Delhi. The Guru taking with him only five of his devoted Sikhs including Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Gurdita and Bhai Dyala marched towards Delhi by stages. On the way he preached his gospel of fearlessness, truth, freedom and righteousness to the people. At Agra he was arrested and was taken to Delhi.

The Guru's encounter with Aurangzeb is of great cultural significance. To the bigoted Emperor who believed that Islam was the only true religion on the earth and who wished that all non-muslims should be converted to Islam, the Guru gave the message of catholicity and tolerance. He told him that there were more than one road leading to the palace of God, the true King. The Guru was offered the exalted priesthood of Islam in the event of his becoming a Musalman. The Guru spurned the offer and pointed out that conversion by force was wrong because religion was a matter of the heart. Aurangzeb threatened the Guru that he would be tortured mercilessly if he did not embrace Islam. The Guru emphatically told the Emperor that he could not impose one religion on the world. The Guru thus took a strong moral stand and championed the human rights in those barbaric times.

Heroic Sufferings

The Guru stood against the evil of persecuting people on account of their religion, the worst evil in history which has taken the toll of millions of lives. He became the prop of the powerless pundits. He knew the consequence of such a stand. He was oppressed and afflicted but he did not accept conversion. He did not demand a personal relief from suffering. He suffered heroically but such was his extraordinary self-poise that he "uttered not a groan."

The concept of the suffering saint is green in the pages of history. Christ too suffered crucifixion and bore men's griefs and carried their sorrows. But the Guru not only himself suffered but was made to see the terrible sufferings of his devoted ones—Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Dayala. Bhai Mati Dass was publicly sawn alive into two halves. Bhai Dayala was boiled alive in a cauldron. Barbarism could not go further. The gigantic horror of the situation did not make the Guru swerve from the path of righteousness. He could not be frightened into acceptance of conversion. He himself was locked in an iron cage that had, thorn-like, sharp nails bulging inside it. He had to stand in a stooping posture. But his soul knew no stooping.

The Holy Martyrdom

Aurangzeb was led by his conversion complex and inhuman impulses. When temptations and tortures failed to convert the Guru to Islam, he became furious and issued orders for the execution of the Guru. The Guru, on learning the order, became ready to cast off his body, impermanent and perishable, without any remorse or tinge of hate and anxiety. He was taken out of the iron cage. He took his ablutions at a neighbouring well. As he began to say his last prayers, he asked the executioner to strike off his neck when he bent down at the conclusion of the prayer. He recited the holy prayer of *Japji* in full serenity and faced the executioner's sword on his neck to fulfil his great mission. Thus Guru Tegh Bahadur was publicly beheaded near Chandni Chowk in Delhi. But the moral victory was of the Guru who had willingly suffered the fatal severance of the head from the body for the sake of righteousness and for the stricken Hindu humanity. Guru Gobind Singh has beautifully described the unprecedented martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in the following words :

He protected the frontal marks and sacrificial threads
of the Hindus.

And displayed great bravery in this Kali age.

When he put an end to his life for the sake of holy men,
He gave his head, but uttered not a groan.

He suffered martyrdom for the sake of religion ;
He gave his head but swerved not from his determination.¹

The Guru's martyrdom was the fulfilment of the purpose of his life. He offered the highest sacrifice to shake the throne of injustice, to protect the oppressed millions. It was his love of the suffering humanity to the point of self-effacement. Sacrifice, in fact, was the need of the hour to kindle a sense of living courage, to re-vitalize the faith, to rejuvenate the spirit of chivalry and to re-orchestrate the scattered energies of the people.

The Holy Martyrdom—Its Impact and Significance

The impact of Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacrifice was significant and far-reaching. The Emperor read in it the impossibility of converting the entire mass of the Hindus into Islam. Such was its creative potency that it released energy that changed the outlook of the people of the Punjab and gave them strength to go forward under the dynamic leadership of Guru Gobind Singh. In fact, with the holy martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur a point was reached where resistance to imperial tyranny became imperative. It awakened Guru Gobind Singh to the grim reality of the Mughal domination and gave him a new historic mission to meet the challenge of the Mughal oppression. He created the heroic order of the Khalsa and breathed life into the dead masses of the Punjab.

Guru Gobind Singh took the sword in defence of Dharma and generated a new spirit of idealism and heroism in history. He invoked God as Murari (Destroyer of the Demon Mura) as Sarb-Loh (The All-Steel), as Kharg-ketu (Holder of the Sword-Flag) and took the sword against the tyrants of his times. This was not against but in complete accord with the inherent dynamism of the creative vision released by Guru Nanak.

1. *Bichitra Natak*, Chap. V.

Guru Nanak too called God the Destroyer of Evil (Asur Sanghar). At another place he says :

To set one's foot forward on the path (of true love) one should not hesitate to give up one's freedom.²

For a man of God mere pursuing the path of righteousness is not enough. He should defend righteousness and suffer and even sacrifice his life for it. Guru Nanak had been a clear-eyed witness of the conversion of the Hindus into Muslims :

Under the force of circumstance people have now to accept the Muslim creed, or to practise deception (by pretending to accept it).³

The wheel of history changed active conversion to forcible conversion, which was repugnant to the human spirit and free dignity of man. Hence sacrifice was needed to save Dharma from tyrants and to create a new race of men, God-oriented but lion-hearted, prepared to die under the sword as well as to wield the sword for the protection of all that is noble and good and holy.

Guru Nanak has asserted that evil must be resisted on all fronts, in all forms. "The essence of evil", says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "lies in invading what is regarded as another's sphere."⁴ Religious persecution is evil. The task of a saint in Sikhism is not to liberate only himself, but others too. For this purpose he has to fight spiritual darkness without. The spectacle of a saintly personality fighting oppression to make the world safe for spiritual democracy is in consonance with the law of spiritual creativity. When the dark night of evil envelops the earth, when the lights of truth and righteousness are blotted out, it is the duty of the saints, pure in heart and devoted in spirit, to spread as well as to safeguard the values which constitute the distinguishing marks of human greatness and perfection. This is the crown and culmination of Guru Nanak's.

2. *Adi Granth*, p. 1412.

3. *Ram Kali*, M. 1.

4. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 103.

creative vision. The loving contemplation of the divine Lord is made not an escape from history but brought in relation to history to purify its meaning and purpose.

It required a superhuman act of will to resist tyranny unleashed by powerful Mughal Emperors, and Guru Gobind Singh by wielding the sword to fight oppression and unrighteousness generated a new spirit of Dharma-oriented chivalry in history. To lift people out of their spineless servility and servitude, to inspire them to fight against the powers of darkness, to rouse them to live with dignity, to "make the sparrows hunt down hawks", to "make one person dominate over a legion (a lakh and a quarter)"—all this was indeed an uphill task and Guru Gobind Singh, with his flaming faith in the triumph of Good and God's Will, performed it successfully. To bring about such a glorious transformation of human character, he worked a great miracle in history.

True saintly life does not consist in mere eliminating self-will but in fighting the lusts and hungers of evil men in power, which envelop the world in darkness of exploitation and violence. Who will not recognise the need to restrain murderers ? A man of God who has the vision of the eternal Lord and submits to His Will does not overlook the importance of life and history. He rather gives a creative expression to the fullness of his life which is the life of God.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Martyrdom heralded the dawn of a fine heroic temper which shaped the course of history of the Punjab in particular and released a living political emotion, expressive of the voice of the awakened soul of India in general. It opened a new dimension of human toughness and endurance, of a righteous revolutionary will to fight against aggression, injustice and tyranny.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was thus not trapped in history ; he rather projected an unexampled image of his daring and creative religious leadership on the historical horizon.

Philosophical Implications of the Guru's Martyrdom

We find that there are three major philosophical considerations implicit in the Guru's creative martyrdom : an enlightened acceptance of the challenge of history, the holiness of the will to sacrifice and the refusal to perform a miracle. No estimate of the Guru's sacrifice would be complete unless a proper appraisal of these intrinsic views is made, for the weight and vitality of the Guru's response to the historical crisis basically depends upon the quality of the vision that is inherent in it.

Meeting the Challenge of History

In the splendid act of sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur we see the unlocking of the reservoirs of spiritual energy to meet the affront to national honour. To put up with tyranny is to suffer humiliation. Aurangzeb had inflicted a series of tyrannies on the Hindus by reimposing *Jaziya*, by demolishing their places of worship and by banning to teach and follow their religious practices. That there was a wave of resentment among the Hindus is clear from the fact that thousands of Hindus were put into jail and thousands were massacred for not forsaking the faith of their forefathers. But the fact remains that there was no idea of nationhood at that time, and no national leadership to turn their isolated resistance into a people's movement. At this juncture the Guru's decision to offer his life as a sacrifice had a great historical significance. Since it was conveyed to Aurangzeb through the Pundits that the Guru should be first converted to Islam and the entire mass of Hindus would follow his example, it signified a clear-cut recognition of Guru Tegh Bahadur as a national religious leader, and the Guru came forward with a high sense of mission and fine resolve to redeem national honour.

It may be mentioned that the Guru being a man of God had no quarrel with the Muslims. In fact, he had several Muslim disciples and believed in religious co-existence. His decision to undergo sacrifice was his voice of protest against religious persecution which was morally unacceptable to him. His protest was against Aurangzeb's rule of injustice and oppression.

History bears testimony to the facts that Aurangzeb for grabbing power had thrown his father into prison and had killed his two brothers. He, in his fanatic religious zeal, had even killed Sar-mad, a great Sufi Faqir. But when the Emperor's tyranny crossed all limits, the Guru stood as a bulwark against the onslaught of the imperial bigotry and protected the religious rights of the people. This act would obviously entail terrible sufferings and horrible tortures. But the Guru was willing to pay the price for religious freedom. He bore all sufferings with equanimity of spirit, with full faith in God and in the ultimate triumph of goodness. He gave up his life for the ideal, for faith, for human dignity and freedom.

It is not easy to insist on morality and righteousness before ruthless holders of power. The Guru met Aurangzeb with light of love, goodwill and truth in his mind, but Aurangzeb had no eyes for all that. It may be made clear that the Sikh Guru were not arm-chair spiritual teachers or philosophers. They were creative religious leaders who not only expounded their firmly realized principles concerning God, truth, virtue, and happiness but were also aware of the dark times of history in which they lived. So they had to confront the spiritual, moral, psychological, social and political issues directly. They had to face the multiple issues of choice and responsibility. Yet they met the challenges of history, without budging an inch from the path of righteousness.

The way Guru Tegh Bahadur met the challenge of history shows the triumph of self-enlightenment in action. It was a unique practical application of Guru Nanak's great wisdom in a situation triggered by the historical condition.

The Guru, in fact, practised what may be called spiritual ethics. It was a standard of conduct that involved self-surrender to the Cosmic Will, the laws of which he comprehended because he had attained self-enlightenment. His spiritual consciousness had interior relationship with the will of God. He had realised by virtue of his meditation that the world, a flow of time and events, was grounded in the Cosmic Soul which is all-pervading.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's resignation to the Will of God is not a stoic resignation but a positive acceptance of the Divine Will and Order. To realize the Divine Order in the universe is to overcome the assertive self or ego, the sense of time, and since the Guru had entered into higher consciousness of timelessness, he vanquished time by rising above its terror and trap. To surrender to the Divine Will or Order is not a matter of belief only. It is a matter of realisation, achieving the state of enlightenment when one's individuality becomes a part of the whole and works within the fold of the perfect universal order. It requires the disciplining of the will to merge one's will with the Will of God. This results in a total and radical transformation of consciousness. The Guru's enlightened consciousness was a living proof of his high degree of perfection in his character, the flowering of the creative aspect of his spiritual personality. It was such a spiritual ethic in action that countered the tyrant's measure to impose his fanatic will upon the Guru.

The Guru looked upon the will of God as the spirit of history that was to manifest itself. It is in this sense the Guru had faith in historical fulfilment. The Guru, in fact, had an intrinsic view of human history. For him, history was not merely a series of political events ; it had a meaningful process, a significant development in accordance with the Will divine, the Cosmic Will. The Divine Law is inescapable. Those who looked at the Guru's faith in the working of the Divine Will from the outside were of the opinion that the Guru should have saved his life by showing a miracle. But the Guru had a deeper glimpse of history, where his own sacrifice was required to further the evolution of history. He believed in the will of God manifesting itself as what is called historical inevitability. He, therefore, did not want to alter the events by showing a miracle.

Moreover, performance of a miracle would amount to changing of the Will (the laws) of God. The Guru believed that all happenings were in perfect order and the order created by God and sustained by his Will (Laws) could not be changed. The Order of God, in fact, represents the march of evolution,

and no miracle can change the design or course of evolution. Those persons who live on the surface are the prisoners of their private preferences and self-interests and cannot comprehend the great design : How everything is within the fold of the Divine Order. In fact, submission to the *Hukam* or the Will of God is an expression of supreme insight into the highest reality. In this state man rises above ego-centred thinking and leans upon the strength of the Lord, for he recognizes that only His Will (Moral Law) operates in the universe. Guru Nanak has finely put it :

The whole visible creation is the expression of His *Hukam*.

Through the *Hukam* the Bull is bearing the earth on his head.⁵

To surrender to the Divine Order is not an escape from but a spiritual conquest of the world.

Sikhism-its Relation to History

Sikhism has an organic relation to history ; it is an historic religion. It holds that the temporal process is sustained and unified by a spiritual principle, the Timeless Being, and therefore, it urges men to realize the purpose of existence, without turning their back upon it but by purifying it with the strength and sweatness of their inner development. It believes that history does not exclude the supra-rational and infra-rational forces. Good and evil both find social expression in the historical experience. Evil and falsehood must be resisted, asserted Guru Nanak. And he himself denounced all that was dehumanising in religious and social practices. A Guru, morally and spiritually evolved holy person, is not held, like Christ, as the fulfilment of historical event. He is considered to be an instrument in the hand of the Lord, the Divine Will, and carries its purpose forward. God, for the Sikh Gurus, though Timeless Absolute, is responsive. "An unresponsive God can be of no significance for religion or for history."⁶

5. *Adi Granth*, p. 1037.

6. Aban G. Widgery, *The Meanings of History*, p. 97.

In Sikhism to submit to the Will of God is not to abide in blissful passivity but to let the Will (the purpose) of God prevail. To put in modern terms, it means to let the law of evolution operate in shaping the history of mankind. This law of evolution is moral in its root. Hence moral forces appear in the form of holy persons to resist and challenge the rule of unrighteousness. This challenge is possible because God is also invoked as the Succourer of Right and Destroyer of Evil. It is this spiritual idealism which endows a man of God with power to resist evil and to wage war against it.

In *Bichitra Natak* Guru Gobind Singh while explicitly describing his mission, writes that God sent him for "the protection of Right, for spreading truth and for destroying wickedness". This reminds us of the *Bhagvad Gita's* famous verse :

For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for establishing Dharma (righteousness), I am born from age to age.⁷

But whereas this is a clear-cut reference to the incarnation of the Divine Lord for the destruction of wickedness from age to age, Sikhism does not believe in the theory that God is subject to incarnation. In *Japji* Guru Nanak explicitly speaks of God as "Timeless Being" and "Unincarnated". Sikhism, however, realistically believes that there is evil as well as suffering in the world. It is not God in human disguise but the man of God, the Saint, who takes on himself suffering to weed out evil from this world. So struggle, suffering and sacrifice are part of the life of the holy man who is anchored in God. And he suffers cheerfully in a spirit of resignation to His Will. Guru Arjun, the first martyred Sikh Guru, says :

In suffering I find joy !

It may be mentioned that a holy man's career is a perpetual struggle. First of all he has to conquer his mind by subduing the five evils—lust, anger, attachment, greed and pride—which

7. *The Bhagvad Gita*, IV, 8.

Guru Tegh Bahadur has alluded to several times in his poetry. Again, his next struggle begins in resisting the outer evil in the form of tyranny, injustice and persecution. The path of true love and saintliness is not the path of roses but that of hardships, and trials, of self-dedication and sacrifice. It requires "placing of one's head on the palm". To perform a miracle to save oneself amounts to deviation from the path. Guru Tegh Bahadur's refusal to show the miracle indicates his mature spiritual side, his deep inner illumination and his complete negation of self-interest. The true miracle is to endure suffering to persevere in the face of temptation, and true heroism lies in resisting aggressive evil to defend the meek and the weak. And Guru Tegh Bahadur performed this true miracle.

The Holiness of the Will-to-Sacrifice

Behind the will-to-sacrifice is the will to create a new order, for sacrifice is an effective means of giving shape and dimension to history. According to the law of ancient wisdom, when tyranny becomes overbearing, when injustice grips the land, sacrifice is needed to redress the imbalance of tyranny. Sacrifice is a powerful instrument for effecting a change.

The main problem facing the world has always been this : How to expel evil from man's nature. The solution to this problem has been suggested in the act of sacrifice. Sacrifice is the law of nature. All great ideals and human possibilities can be achieved through sacrifice. Through sacrifice it is possible to abolish evil from the world and to free mankind from the tyranny of men in power.

Behind The Guru's philosophy of sacrifice is the vision of the moral Law, the Law of action. Man's destiny is the fruit of his actions, performed during his lifetime or during his previous births. Guru Nanak has explicitly stated "As you sow so shall you reap."⁸ So according to the Law of Action, man remains in power so long his meritorious acts bear fruits. If he starts doing sinful deeds, his virtuous acts will start losing their

8. *The Adi Granth*, p. 4 .

force, and the power that he wields will start diminishing. Guru Arjan has said : Those who commit sin shall assuredly be ruined"⁹.

Guru Tegh Bahadur explicitly told Bhai Mati Dass in the prison that he would offer his life and in doing so he "would deprive the Mughals of sovereignty." The idea behind it is that by killing a man of the saintly stature of the Guru, Aurangzeb would be committing a heinous crime. It will set the moral law in action ; as a result of it the good deeds done by him in the earlier births by virtue of which he had gained the royal power, would be exhausted and the process of the decline of his empire would come into operation. The Guru himself elucidated it : "He would turn to ashes the fruit of the meritorious acts which the Emperor had performed in former births, and by which he had obtained sovereignty."¹⁰ This shows that Aurangzeb's tyranny perpetrated on non-muslims had reached a point when a man of God had no other alternative but to lay down his life to put a halt to it by invoking the Moral Law operating in the Universe. This also throws light on the Guru's great faith in the inevitability of human progress. Instead of submitting to the will of the evil-doer, he defied the might of an unjust Emperor by his soul-force.

As regards the importance of sacrifice, it is held in the world-religious tradition that God sacrificed himself to create Universe. In the Purusasukta of *Rigveda* we find the following declaration :

The Supreme Being sacrificed Himself for the purpose of creation.

The book 'Revelation' of the Christians records—"The sheep was sacrificed for the creation of the world". The sheep is the symbol of God's power. It is also mentioned in the ancient religious book *Zarathustra* of Iran :

9. Maru, M. 5.

10. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, p. 382.

When the earth was not Ahur Mazdan, Creator of Universe appeared with great religious sacrifice of Zarvan.

The Indian Puranic lore holds that Lord Shiva drank poison for the redemption of mankind. There is also a Puranic reference to the sacrifice of a saint named Dadhichi. It is said that when a powerful demon invaded heaven and routed the godly forces, it was predicted that the demon could be killed only with a weapon made out of the holy bones of the great ascetic saint, Dadhichi. Indra, accompanied by gods, approached Dadhichi and implored for help. Dadhichi readily agreed to give up his life for the establishment of righteousness.

Thus the ancient religious tradition holds that sacrifice is required not only for creating but also for sustaining the universe and for routing the forces of evil.

Refusal to show a Miracle

The Guru's refusal to show a miracle was not accidental ; it was an integral part of his approach to spirituality, an approach which is in keeping with Guru Nanak's spiritual tradition. To the messengers sent to Guru Tegh Bahadur for prevailing over him to concede to the Emperor's proposal of showing a miracle he replied that "a miracle was the wrath of God ; and to undo what God had done...would be a crime against heaven".¹¹ Later on his son and spiritual successor, Guru Gobind Singh while commenting on the Guru's martyrdom, wrote :

Natak Chetak Kiye Kukaja.

Prabhu logan keh avat laja.

(God's people would be ashamed to perform the tricks of mountebanks and cheats.)¹²

Both these statements imply clear-cut distinctions between religion and magic. A man of God, grounded in the Eternal

11. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, p. 392.

12. *Bichitra Natak*.

Light will consider the performance of magical tricks as a shameful act. The wrath of God falls on the holy man who instead of adhering to the path of spirituality deviates into the bylanes of magic and miracle mongering. The 'wrath of God' signifies a fall from higher spiritual consciousness.

Both the Gurus indicate that magic and religion are sharply opposed to each other. Judged from the psychological standpoint, the will-to-magic typifies a craving for possession. It is rooted in the sentiment of self-regard. It is self-assertive. It smacks of primitivism. Modern psychology too supports this view :

...the savage knows that he himself changes the external world by his impulses and his will.¹³

Magic seeks to pull the world of necessity to its purpose. This shows the primitive character of magic which is rooted in man's will to change the external environments. Sigmund Freud too alludes to it when he holds :

In his fight against the powers of the surrounding world his first weapon was magic, the first forerunner of our modern technology.¹⁴

Magic is thus the mechanistic will of the ego to win the world of necessity to its ends. On witnessing the sufferings of Guru Tegh Bahadur, even the patience of Mati Dass, the Guru's devoted disciple broke down. To quote Macauliffe he (Mati Dass) "charged his Master with practising too much humility, and talked of putting an end to the Mughal rule. The Guru remonstrated with him, and said that man must accept the Will of God. Mati Dass replied that Guru's sufferings were intolerable.¹⁵ The Guru spoke from an illumined consciousness which had undergone a true religious experience. Since his mind was liberated from the downward pull of ego, he could not take recourse to psychic powers to "put an end to the

13. Cattell, Raymond B., *Psychology and the Religious Quest*, p. 17.

14. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, p. 211.

15. Macauliffe, pp. 381-82.

Mughal rule". Had he done so, that would have amounted to stepping down from high spiritual estate to the level of the ego. Acceptance of the Will of God means overcoming of the assertive self or ego. Magic is thus operated from ego-centred consciousness and religion is rooted in the spirit of self-surrender, the highest virtue in Sikhism. "Submission to the Will of God is the highest prayer."¹⁶

The Guru did not show a miracle because he was a mystic saint and not a magician. As a true mystic he believed in "total self-dedication, an active surrender of his whole being" to God. "Mysticism", says Evelyn Underhill, "is not magic. The fundamental difference between the two is this : magic wants to get, mysticism wants to give."¹⁷

Full of the spirit of service and sacrifice, the Guru thought in terms of taking up the cause of righteousness and freedom and not in terms of what he could get for himself from the Imperial Ruler. He, therefore, stood firm as a granite, stuck to his exalted spiritual position and did not budge an inch from it.

The power to perform miracles is recognised by Raja Yoga, the psychologically planned meditation, and even by modern parapsychology. According to Patanjali Yoga, miracles or psychic powers are the spontaneous outcome of one's advancement along the path of spirituality. When the mind becomes deeply absorbed in its real *swarupa*, it acquires *vibhuti*s or psychic powers. But these powers are obstacles in the way of spiritual advancement. The reason is that they tend to make the person ego-centric, whereas religion aims at making man God-centred or Cosmocentric. To run after these powers is to wander in mazes of Maya and to throw away life in vain and idle and shadowy pursuits.

Guru Nanak's words addressed to the Yogis when they asked the Guru to show miraculous powers throw ample light on this issue :

16. *Adi Granth*, p. 13.

17. *Mysticism*, p. 151.

Except for the True Name of the Lord,
no miracle of any kind do I possess.

The great Guru even drew a line of sharp distinction between magic and religion :

All miracles are as shadows, and a waste of life.
God's name alone bestows true merit.

To show the miracles is thus to direct the mind to "the show of things" (Maya), while religion in Sikhism enjoins to achieve enlightenment through meditation on God's name. Even Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru, who was subjected to inhuman tortures and embraced martyrdom, uttered :

Sweet is Thy Will
Nanak begs only for the riches of the Name.¹⁸

The achievement of the spiritual life is thus higher than miracle mongering.

Guru Gobind Singh has, therefore, rightly remarked that "men of God would be ashamed to perform magical tricks". It implies that religion and magic are fundamentally opposed to each other, a fact which has been sharply observed even by Sir James Frazer. He holds that there is "a fundamental distinction and even opposition of principle between magic and religion".¹⁹ To put into psychological terms, religion and magic represent two states of consciousness, the psychic or ego-ridden state which pines for self-gratification and the spiritual state which is accompanied by inner peace and purity, inner freedom and fearlessness resulting from spiritual transfiguration of one's being. Guru Arjan has beautifully said :

They who are imbued with God's love
are not deceived by Maya.

.....
By God's name all their fear is dispelled.²⁰

18. *Adi Granth*, p. 394.

19. *The Golden Bough*, Vol. I, XVI.

20. Macauliffe, *Op. Cit.*, p. 149,

Moreover, the will-to-magic is associated with the instinct of self-preservation, but in true religious experience the will to live is merged in the Will of the Lord. The Holy scripture says :

Birth and Death are by His Will.²¹

Guru Tegh Bahadur's preference of death over succumbing to the Emperor's proposals for showing a miracle shows that he had acquired a complete mastery over his mind, and that there was no stir of anxiety in his mind. According to modern psycho-analytical theory the idea of self-preservation is operative in a state of anxiety :

...For while anxiety is truly apprehension of terror ; yet in anxiety states we can see the psychical self-preservation function at work.

The Guru transcended anxiety in a spirit of resignation to the Will of God. Guru Nanak has stated :

Anxiety is not annulled except by attuning ourselves to God.

Guru Tegh Bahadur himself has said :

It is by worshipping God that man dwells in the fearless state.²²

The Guru's refusal to show a miracle was the victory of spiritual self-transformation over the egotistic ambition. By doing so he showed that his mind was the instrument of the divine Lord and not of the ego. Philosophically interpreted, we find that the whole issue boils down to two distinctive but divergent attitudes—magical and religious. The former responds to the call of the appetitive self in man ; the latter makes man move on a plane of moral and spiritual exaltation. And it is the latter attitude which made itself manifest in the Guru's

21. *Adi Granth*, p. 412.

22. Sloka, 33.

adherence to his ideal position of not showing a miracle even in the face of gravest provocations.

Since there is implicit a grand philosophy behind the Guru's will to sacrifice, it is neither sentimental nor romantic but the expression of a soul, highly evolved along the path of inner enlightenment and fearlessness.

Distorted Versions Refuted

The tendency on the part of some historians to undervalue and play down the Guru's martyrdom is deplorable. To justify the imperial standpoint for the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, they advocate the so-called 'probable' facts which, in fact, are distorted pictures of the Guru's martyrdom. Syed Muhammad Latif writes :

...it is more probable that the Guru was executed as a rebel against Government.²³

Dr. Trumpp remarks :

The Guru appears by no means as a humble spiritual instructor, but riding at the front of well-armed disciples,...made predatory incursions on the Muhammedan population.²⁴

Even Cunningham writes that the Guru was "more of the kingly than priestly spirit".²⁵ Almost all such writers get their cue from Ghulam Hussain who earlier had stated :

...finding himself at the head of so many thousands of people, (the Guru) became aspring; and he united his concern with one Hafyzadam, a Mohemedan fakir.... These two men...forsake every honest calling, they fell to subsisting by plunder and rapine, laying waste the whole province of Punjab.²⁶

23. *History of the Punjab*, 1964, p. 260.

24. *Adi Granth*, p. IXXXIX.

25. *History of the Sikhs*, p. 85.

26. *Siryar-ul-Mutakherin*, English Translation, Raymond, pp. 84-86.

Latif too echoes the same version when he writes that “from a devout *udasi* (indifferent to World) in Bengal, the Guru seems to have turned out a regular freebooter on his return to the Punjab,”²⁷ and that he indulged in “pedatory excursions”.²⁸ The principal aim of these historians is to justify the Guru’s execution by throwing a political colouring on the Guru’s popularity during his extensive tours which he undertook to spread his spiritual message. In fact, the Guru’s increasing popularity excited the jealousy of Ram Rai who whispered a lie to Aurangzeb against the Guru’s ambitious designs. The Emperor’s indignation was further roused when he learnt that the Guru had taken up the cause of the persecuted Hindus. Even Latif has mentioned that Ram Rai had represented to the Emperor that the Guru’s “designs were detrimental to the State”, and on that account he had been summoned to come to Delhi” as a pretender to power and disturber of peace”.²⁹

Latif also explicitly states :

The Emperor had in those days thrown hundreds of Brahmans into Jail, in the hope that, if they first embraced the religion of the prophet, the rest of the Hindus would readily follow their example.³⁰

This establishes that the Guru’s offence in the Emperor’s eyes was the cause which the Guru had taken up, to thwart the conversion of Kashmiri Brahmans. The Guru’s refusal to abandon his faith and to embrace Mohamedanism must have further provoked Aurangzeb, since in it he saw the defeat of his plan to make the Hindus become converts on a mass scale.

As regards the version that the Guru had turned from “a devout *udasi* to a freebooter”, it sounds hollow and fictitious, when considered in the light of his life and writings. While looking at him through his personal life, his work or his vision, there is no getting away from the fact that he was a saint in

27. *History of the Punjab*, p. 259.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *History of the Punjab*, p. 259.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

whom moral and spiritual values had taken deep roots. The picture that emerges from a study of his life and sacred compositions is of a man of God who had dedicated his life to love of God and submission to His Will. His poetry repeatedly stresses the necessity of over-coming the ego and of developing restraint and self-poise. To charge such a saint with "pedatory excursions" and "rebellion" against the Government on the eve of his arrest for his sympathetic response to the entreating Kashmiri Brahmans is obviously a travesty of truth and a politically-oriented trend to undermine and under-estimate the spiritual and historical greatness of the Guru.

Again, such a charge does not fit in with the psychological facts of his personality. The Guru's saintly stature is evidenced in the manner he bore all sufferings and tortures with unruffled equanimity on the eve of his martyrdom and did not move away from the supreme principle of righteousness and spirituality. How could such a saint step outside the moral orbit all of a sudden on his return from Bengal? Even Latif cannot help paying tribute to the Guru's saintly virtue after his execution :

His life was extinct, but the memory of his priestly virtue remained in the world.³¹

And this automatically contradicts his earlier remark that the Guru "seems to have turned out a regular freebooter on his return to the Punjab". It appears that Latif had inserted this version of Ghulam Hussain in his treatment of Guru Tegh Bahadur, which appears like a foreign matter incorporated into his text, not being fully absorbed into it, for it contradicts his own views, as we have shown in the preceding discussion.

Need for an Integral Approach

For proper assessment of the character and personality of a person who is historically significant, one must bring a larger integral vision to historical events. We cannot ignore the cultural vitality of such a man, his innate potentialities which

31. *The History of the Punjab*, p. 260.

command the external environment and influence human attitude and life-style. History is, after all, "the record of man's effort to prevail over his environment"³². It involves the element of progress; the progress is not outer but inner also. It is not external environment only that determines life; it is one's inner development too that determines one's response to life. We cannot ignore the richness and creativeness of inner life which is at the base of one's personality. The value principle cannot be divorced from the meaning of history; unless we are content with a distorted picture or with distorted facts torn from the context of the whole. We cannot ignore intrinsic thoughts or psychic forces acting upon our consciousness, out of whose interplay the general behaviour comes into operation. Historical events, from the psychological standpoint, reveal the latest reality out of which they are but surface manifestations. It is during historical events of magnitude that creative potentialities of significant historical personalities come to the fore.

Judged from the philosophy of history, we find that the Guru's emergence as a firm-minded, high-souled, iron-willed saint displaying unprecedented poise and patience in the face of barbaric tortures, and his amazing acceptance of the Divine Will and total resignation to it was not a sudden breaking in of a holy man upon the political scene but was the result of a life long discipline and creative enlightenment, as we have duly illustrated in the preceding chapter. His confrontation with the challenging moment of history was a "psychologically experienced situation" in which psychic facts of his earlier life blossomed forth into a supreme sense of sacrifice. It is perceptively stated :

A psychological process accompanies and reflects material occurrences, for there is a rhythm between satisfaction and creation, between rest and change.³³

The Guru's life shows a coherent regular pattern of development, which in the event of his martyrdom fulfils a divine

32. G.P. Gooch, *Historical Surveys and Portraits*, p. 214.

33. G.P. Gooch, *Historical Surveys and Portraits*, p. 214.

purpose. The Guru himself saw history in terms of divine fulfilment.

He rejected the alternative of performing a miracle. To reject miracles is to reject supernatural revolution. This indicates his philosophy of Religion. Religion is not miracle mongering, a magic show, but an evolving human experience. Again, the performance of miracle would have saved his life. The Guru by sticking to his ideal position shows his preference to self-development over self-preservation. He had grown fearless for he had known the reality of God in religious experience. In his poetical writings he explicitly states that devotion to God bestows the "fearless dignity" on man, and it is the "fearless dignity" born of his rigorous spiritual discipline that lent an unusual glow to his willingness for sacrifice. We cannot ignore this progress in consciousness while evaluating the Guru's response to the historic situation. We should study with imaginative understanding extra-ordinary behaviour of men of destiny in a given situation. We cannot ignore the formation and realization of the Guru's ideas and ideals, in short, value experience in assessing the character and achievement of his historical personality.

Lack of attention to value in the historical process does not yield a vision of the whole. The Guru, while embracing martyrdom, brought into action contemplative wisdom, the highest value of human life, and this sharply distinguished him as a supreme martyr. At the supreme moment the Guru's fundamental attitude to life came to the fore.

Spiritual Drama of Challenge-and-Response

Guru Tegh Bahadur's life of creative discipline culminating in creative martyrdom can be well understood in terms of Toynbee's historical formula of "Challenge and Response".³⁴ According to Toynbee, societies achieve growth through "the dedicated individual and creative minority". "The creative individual", according to Toynbee, "practices withdrawal and Return. He leaves the world for contemplation and enlighten-

34. Arnold, J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. IX, p. 382.

ment so that the world to which he eventually returns may profit from his creative absence".³⁵ His return and subsequent acts contribute to the progressive enrichment of culture and civilization.

In Guru Tegh Bahadur's life the rhythm of challenge and response manifests itself in a remarkable degree. According to Sikh tradition he withdrew, not from the world, but to a meditation cell in his own home at Baba Bakala, and lived a life of contemplative seclusion for twenty years. This was a big step towards self-enlightenment. Self-enlightenment is, in fact, essential preliminary to self-change. Through meditation and devotion to God, one's consciousness is purified. One realises the light of God in pure consciousness only. Before the Guru started preaching his gospel of disarming the ego, he himself by virtue of his long spell of meditation had attained self-poise and mastery over his mind through single minded devotion to God.

Withdrawing or contemplative solitude is necessary for the unfolding of the Divine in us, for the transformation of personality so that it becomes eminently fit for rendering humanitarian services to the world. The world is served nobly when it is overcome spiritually. And how is the world conquered spiritually. Guru Nanak says :

He who conquers his mind conquers the World.

Through single-minded meditation mind is freed from bondage to unreal values and unruly passions. He whose mind is not the playground of passions is blessed with inner enlightenment ; he rises above the self-centred feel of pleasure and pain and remains unperturbed in prosperity and adversity. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself has sung of this state of the mind of an enlightened person in his hymns.

It is important to bring the mind under restraint through meditation because the act of subsequent service is not defiled by any selfish motive. When spiritual insight is gained, one serves humanity with all his heart and strength, with all his soul

35. Robert Paul Mohan, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 135-36.

and mind. Of several blessings that flow from meditation and dedicated devotion to God, the chief blessing is the attainment of wisdom which imparts inner fortification and fearlessness. It is the power of spiritual realization that totally drives fear out of the mind. Guru Nanak says :

My soul, with the attainment of Truth, fear is banished.³⁶

In the *Rigveda* God is described as *Abhayam Jyoti* (Fearless Light). In *Kathoupanishad* He is also called *Abhayam* (Fearless One). In the very first stanza of *Japji*, the basic Sikh prayer, God is conceived as the One, Indivisible, Eternal Reality, Fearless and Rancourless. The spirit of fearlessness is derived from contemplation of God, the Fearless One. Guru Arjan, in the psychological fitness of things, rightly assures us :

Those who worship the Fearless Lord get free from fear of every sort.³⁷

The spirit of spiritual fearlessness is necessary to resist the tyranny and wrong-doings of tyrannical persons in power. It may be mentioned that Guruship (Succession to Guru Nanak's spiritual throne) was not a bed of roses. It meant a life of utmost purity and truthfulness, with a willingness to serve, suffer and even undergo sacrifice for the cause of Truth. Guru Har Rai has finely remarked :

The Guruship is like a tigress's milk contained in a golden Cup.³⁸

The golden cup is the vessel of mind perfectly purified and enlightened. For that purpose inner preparation is necessary. Meditation is thus withdrawing to the recesses of one's being and one returns from it with a flame-like spirit, a vivacious magnanimity of heart and magnificence of spirit to render service to mankind.

36. *Adi Granth*, p. 18.

37. Gauri, M. 5.

38. Macauliffe, op . cit., p, 310.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur came out of the meditation Cell, in obedience to the call of the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak, he devoted himself heart and soul to the welfare of the people, preaching his gospel of love, truth, uprightness and fearlessness. This was his return to the world to deal with it and to act in it. And when a man of God acts, he acts in a heroic way which surpasses the myths of old, for he is acting nobly, wisely and righteously in confrontation with grim realities of the World where Evil has pitched its tents.

As a true saint, Guru Tegh Bahadur combated evil on two fronts, domestic and political. On the domestic front he was the victim of uncontrollable jealousy of his nephews and others who were aspirants and claimants to Guruship. He met this spirit of jealousy with his saintly virtue of forgiveness, noble conduct, non-attachment and tolerance. The spirit of vengeance is totally absent in his dealings with Dhir Mal and others who even tried to put an end to his life. He not only forgave them but also restrained his own men to inflict any harm on others.

It is in his confrontation with evil on the political front that heroic virtues of his true saintliness manifested themselves. He accepted the challenge of history and responded to the crying need of the hour to protect the religious rights of his countrymen, though he knew full well the gigantic risk it involved. He was arrested and tortured but he declined to accept Islam as well as to work a miracle. This shows that his spirit would not be confined nor compromised in the effort to protect Right (Dharma).

The Guru willingly offered his life as a sacrifice, as we have already discussed, to further the forward movement of the Moral Law for the defeat of Evil in the World. The magnificence of his spirit shines through the whole episode of his martyrdom. It's the richness of his spiritual life, the aroma of inner sweetness and strength which emanates through this grand drama of Challenge-and-Response.